

Abstract for the 62<sup>nd</sup> IAC Conference

Open Collaboration: A Problem Solving Strategy That *Is* Redefining NASA's Innovative Spirit

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In 2010, NASA's Space Life Sciences Directorate announced the successful results from pilot experiments with open innovation methodologies. Specifically, utilization of internet based external crowd sourcing platforms to solve challenging problems in human health and performance related to the future of spaceflight. The follow-up to this success was an internal crowd sourcing pilot program entitled NASA@work, which was supported by the InnoCentive@work software platform. The objective of the NASA@work pilot was to connect the collective knowledge of individuals from all areas within the NASA organization via a private web based environment. The platform provided a venue for NASA Challenge Owners, those looking for solutions or new ideas, to pose challenges to internal solvers, those within NASA with the skill and desire to create solutions. The pilot was launched in 57 days, a record for InnoCentive and NASA, and ran for three months with a total of 20 challenges posted Agency wide. The NASA@work pilot attracted over 6000 participants throughout NASA with a total of 183 contributing solvers for the 20 challenges posted. At the time of the pilot's closure, solvers provided viable solutions and ideas for 17 of the 20 posted challenges. The solver community provided feedback on the pilot describing it as a barrier breaking activity, conveying that there was a satisfaction associated with helping co-workers, that it was "fun" to think about problems outside normal work boundaries, and it was nice to learn what challenges others were facing across the agency. The results and the feedback from the solver community have demonstrated the power and utility of an internal collaboration tool, such as NASA@work.